

PATENT APPLICATION

in the

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

for

**MAT FOR VISUAL ARTWORK
AND METHOD OF MAKING SAME**

by

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MAT FOR VISUAL ARTWORK AND METHOD OF MAKING SAME

TECHNOLOGICAL FIELD

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The present invention relates to mats for framing visual artwork, such as photographs, and methods of making the mats.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Often times people find that they want to give a special gift to someone, but have a difficult time deciding on the gift. In many situations, the giver wants
15 the gift to have meaning, be unique, and be pleasing to the receiver.

The present invention seeks to provide a unique item which may be tailored for a particular person or
20 event.

Another advantage of the present invention is that an aesthetic item is provided which provides pleasure when displayed.
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Yet another advantage of the present invention is that it is a means for preserving memorable moments.

Still another advantage of the present invention
30 is the provision of a method of making such unique items

described hereinabove.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

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In accordance with the present invention, a mat for framing visual artwork and a method of making the mat are disclosed. The mat includes a border and an artwork-viewing window interior to the border so that the window is surrounded by the border. In one embodiment of the present invention, the border of the mat displays at least two distinct computer-manipulated photographs in a pleasing manner.

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In another embodiment, the mat of the present invention displays one computer-manipulated photograph or more than one copy of a single computer-manipulated photograph. When the mat includes more than one copy of a single photograph, the copies may abut one another and may be blended at their abutting edges.

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Other advantages of the present invention will be readily appreciated as the same becomes better understood after reading the subsequent description taken in conjunction with the appendant drawings.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

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FIGURE 1 is a front view of a mat according to

the present invention.

FIGURE 2 is a front view of another mat according to the present invention.

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FIGURE 3 is a front view of yet another mat according to the present invention.

FIGURE 4 is a front view of still another mat according to the present invention.

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FIGURE 5 is a schematic summary of the method of making a mat according to the present invention.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention generally entails a mat for framing visual artwork and a method of making such a mat. The term "mat" as used herein is used to mean the typical type of mat that surrounds a photograph or other piece of artwork. The artwork may be anything desirable to be matted, such as a photograph, pressed flowers, or three dimensional memorabilia.

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The shape of the mat is not limited. The mat may be rectangular, round, oval, elliptical, and the like.

The mats of the present invention usually have a flat frontal surface; however, they may be rounded or curved so as to form a three-dimensional object by themselves.

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Furthermore, the thickness of the mat is not limited. The mat of the present invention may be as thin as paper or adhered to an item of any thickness, e.g., a box.

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The border of a mat of the present invention may be of any size. Usually, the mat is proportional in dimensions to the size of the picture or item to be framed.

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Figures 1 and 2 show front views of exemplary mats of the present invention, namely, mat 10 and mat 20, respectively. Mats 10 and 20 have borders 12 and 22, respectively, and artwork-viewing windows 14 and 24, respectively. Border 12 includes photographs 16 and 18, and border 22 includes photographs 30, 32, 34, and 36. The photographs are also shown separately in the Figures.

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In the embodiments shown in Figures 1 and 2, the photographs displayed on the mats are distinct from one another and are typically personal photographs, for example, from a family photo album. The photographs are usually selected out of many photographs as being special to the person who will display the mat.

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Although Figures 1 and 2 show the use of two photographs and four photographs, respectively, the mat may employ several photographs, often ten to twenty.

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Preferably, photographs 16 and 18 at least abut one another at their adjacent edges. Similarly, preferably, photographs 30, 32, 34, and 36 at least abut

one another at their adjacent edges. It is also preferred that the adjacent photographs overlap slightly at their edges so that it would appear to a novice that there is no distinct line of separation between the photographs. In
5 an alternative embodiment, a part of a photograph may be placed on another photograph to achieve a particular effect.

The manipulation techniques used with respect to
10 the photographs are referred to here as "computer-manipulated" techniques. These techniques include cropping, cutting, changing the intensity, positioning the photographs relative to each other, overlapping the photographs, softening the photographs, selective coloring
15 of the photographs, etc.

Figure 3 shows mat 40 displaying a single computer-manipulated photograph 42 within the mat. Figure 4 shows mat 50 displaying a single photograph 52 two
20 times. In Figure 4, it may not be immediately evident that a single photograph was used twice; however, with the following explanation, it should become understandable. For mat 50, it was desired to use photograph 52 to fill the mat. However, when photograph 52 was expanded to fit
25 the shape of mat 50, photograph 52 had to be "stretched" taller which resulted in the children in the photo appearing to be taller and thinner. To solve the problem of the distortion, the children in the mat were then overlayed with an image which consisted of the children's
30 image from the original photograph with any excess of the picture removed. Resultingly, the children again appear normal.

It is usually desirable to mute the photographs of the mat so that the photographs have less intensity than their originals. By muting the photographs of the mat, any artwork displayed in the window is not overshadowed by the mat. It is conceivable, however, that if a particular photograph to be matted is already light in intensity, it may be desirable to make the photographs of the mat maintain their intensity, so as to contrast the mat with the framed photograph.

Preferably, the edge of each photograph of the mat are gradually softened so that the image fades away to the outermost edge of the photograph. This softening technique is especially advantageous when combined with the overlapping of the photographs, so that a better blending of photographs is achieved. One overall desirable appearance of the mat of the present invention is one of a collage of photographs, wherein a novice cannot tell where one picture ends and the next begins. Optionally, text may also be included on the mat.

The photographs on the mat of the present invention may be colored or black and white, as desired. One special technique is to print the photographs in predominantly black and white with a minor amount of colored items dotting the mat. For example, in a mat with a sports theme, several sports photographs may be used. The photographs would be black and white with only the uniform colors colored (in the team colors).

Aside from the sports theme, many other themes

may be used with the mat. For example, a mat for a wedding picture could includes photos taken during the couple's relationship. An anniversary mat could include photos of various memorable moments of the married couple's lives.

One method of making the mat of the present invention is illustrated in Figure 5. The first step of this method is to scan selected photograph(s) and store the scanned image(s) under separate names in computer memory as bit maps, J-pegs, or mixed files, for example. Using a photograph-manipulation software program, such as "PICTURE IT 2000", a software program available from the "MICROSOFT" Corporation, an empty border of a mat is drawn to the desired size and configuration. A narrow strip along the inside or outside edges of the mat may be darkened or otherwise altered to help delineate the edges of the mat's border.

The photographs are then recalled into the drawn mat and sized and cropped to fit the drawn mat. The photographs may be interchanged in position to achieve the most aesthetic appearance.

The photographs are preferably muted, softened at the edges, and overlapped slightly. Once the mat has the desirable look, the mat may be printed on paper.

After the mat has been printed, excess paper is cut from the mat and the window is cut out of the mat. The photograph-covered mat may now be placed in a frame, such as a wooden, plastic, or metal frame, and a

photograph may be placed behind the photograph-covered mat to be shown through the window.

5 Having now fully described the invention, it will be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art that many changes and modifications can be made thereto without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as set forth herein.